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ABSTRACT

This 2-year study describes existing day care arrangements for school age children and examines the problems of providing day care for these children. A total of 30 day care centers and 73 family day care homes were included in the analysis, based on observation and interview schedules developed for the study. In addition to a general description of the population served, the types of available group care experiences are described. Problems of providing day care to school age children involve space and equipment utilization, licensing, staffing and staff training, and problems caused by regulations, procedures, and legal liability. Physical separation from the community and the lack of opportunities for personal initiative are identified as basic activity program problems. Suggestions for remediation of these problems are offered; and several models for group day care arrangements in conjunction with public schools are described. (ED)

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A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF DAY CARE ARRANGEMENTS FOR SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN

Status Report
CB 264
May, 1975

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Prepared for the Office of Child Development,
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00002

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF DAY CARE ARRANGEMENTS FOR SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN

Final Status Report

Abstract of the Original Proposal

The overall purpose of CB-264 was to examine issues of providing day care for children of school age in group care and family day care settings. The major objectives of the first year were (1) to provide descriptive data on the range of programs offering day care to children of school age, (2) to identify critical variables which predict differences in programs, and (3) to develop a method for assessing quality of program. The objectives of the second year were (1) to provide basic descriptive data on care for school age children in licensed family day care settings and (2) to compare the care arrangements in family day care with that of group care. Both studies were conceived as exploratory with the focus on a description of the diversity in types of care now existing in the community and an examination of the conditions necessary for their existence.

The work on both studies was carried out essentially as proposed and both studies have been completed, except for publication of the findings on family day care. This report is in final draft and will be ready for distribution shortly.

Summary of Work Accomplished

First Year -- Group Day Care for School Age Children

Instruments developed. An observation schedule was designed and tested which provided information about the program as it was utilized by children. The basic unit of observation was the activity setting, defined by the social structure, a physical place (with its contents) and an activity which brings structure. A method for coding a series of descriptors for each activity setting was also devised. In addition, a method was developed for coding the overall physical space of the center. An interview schedule also was designed to provide information about the services provided and operating practices and policies in each center.

Data collected. Originally, we had planned to study twenty-five centers. We raised this number to thirty because the larger number appeared to provide a more adequate sample. Using a table or random numbers we selected a sample of thirty centers stratified according to the following types:

5 Department of Public Services Title IV-A Contract Centers 1/
5 Board of Education Children's Centers, combination preschool and school age

1/ Our final sample was reduced to four when one center first refused, then agreed to participate but arrangements for the interview and observation never could be completed.

5 Board of Education Children's Centers, school age only
5 Proprietary centers, school age only
5 Proprietary centers, combined preschool and school age
5 Non-profit centers of any type, charitable or religious

In these 29 centers each director was interviewed and four samples of children's involvement were recorded, one in the morning and three in the afternoon. We returned in the summer and obtained three samples of involvement during the morning program. These procedures yielded a total of 1,642 activity settings. An additional 355 activity settings were obtained from 16 recreational programs which met in summer only.

Second Year -- Family Day Care for School Age Children

Instruments developed. Interview schedules were developed for both winter and summer interviews. A check list for physical space and a self report on children's involvement in activities also was developed.

Data collected. A random sample of 247 licensed family day care givers (out of 2972 licensed homes in the county of Los Angeles) were interviewed by us 2/. Of this number 26% no longer had children in care, 44% had only preschool children and 29% (73) had one or more children of school age. The 73 women who had school age children in their care were interviewed in their own home and contacted again for another interview in the summer. Following each interview a report was obtained of a day's activities of the school age children in care.

Publication and Dissemination of Findings

The results of the group care study have been published in a 124 page monograph entitled School's Out! Group Day Care for the School Age Child. Thirty-five copies have been sent to Office of Child Development. Thirty complimentary copies have been mailed to such groups as Child Welfare League, Day Care and Child Development Council, etc. Approximately 1800 copies are available for distribution. A final report of the second year study on family day care is in final draft and will be available for distribution within 30 to 60 days.

In addition with the help of funds from the Rosenberg Foundation a film strip for parents on day care for school age children, entitled School's Out -- Out-of-School Care, has been developed. It will be ready for distribution on July 1, 1975.

Numerous presentations of findings have been made to audiences such as National Association for the Education of Young Children yearly conference, California Children's Center Association, Community Child Care Evaluators, (Licensing Department) State Department of Health, Southern California Association Education of Young Children, Bay Area Association Education of Young Children, etc.

2/ Another 71 could not be located even though we verified the address with the licensing unit.

00004

A Summary of Selected Findings

Presented below is a brief summary of selected findings that would seem to have implications for social policy surrounding any planning for the day care needs of school age children. These findings are presented in more comprehensive form in the two final reports.

The following program types were identified as providing care for school age children:

Centers -- Existing Program Types

Public elementary schools These services are usually housed in special buildings on (or adjacent to) public school grounds, sponsored by local school districts and funded by state and federal money. They may serve children from kindergarten through sixth grade. (These buildings also frequently house programs for children of nursery age.)

Day care sponsored by welfare department Care is provided for both nursery and school age children in a wide variety of existing community facilities. Transportation is provided if necessary.

Private elementary schools Day care is often provided as an inducement to working parents to enroll their children in private school, usually serving kindergarten through sixth grade.

Day care centers for preschool children (both proprietary and non-profit).
1. Many centers provide full day care for kindergarteners only.
2. Some centers accommodate a few five to eight year olds who attended the preschool program and can walk from elementary school to center.

Day care centers (both proprietary and non-profit). Services are provided for both nursery school and for school age children. Such centers may or may not provide transportation.

Day care for school age only (usually proprietary, occasionally non-profit). Care is provided for children of school age only, usually kindergarten through sixth grade. Transportation is provided.

Other Group Programs

In thinking about day care for school age children it seems important to remember that many programs in the community which serve this age group are used as day care programs by parents although this fact is not recognized by the sponsors and built in as part of the program plans. For example, in both group and family day care we found that large numbers of children were attending public summer school, not for any academic reasons, but strictly as a day care supplement. This changing use of summer school is not recognized (or admitted to) by school districts. In addition many programs such as after school play grounds and the more traditional programs offered by recreational agencies are used by parents as day care resources.

00005

Although it might seem an easy matter to suggest that these programs could be instantly turned into day care by supervising arrival and departure of children, this restructuring, in fact, would change many of the operating characteristics of the program. However, it appears that many of these programs could serve day care needs more effectively. Probably the changes which are needed are (1) a meshing of their hours with the needs of working parents and (2) provision of qualified staff who can provide a more individualized type of program. If there were some community planning directed toward sharing resources and some way of providing more resources undoubtedly the supply of care for school age children could be increased. However it is also important to continue services to children currently using the program. Many children in family day care and informal arrangements comprise the population of current users.

Family Day Care

We found that four out of every ten licensed caregivers were caring for at least one child of school age. Among those caregivers with school age children there were several identifiable types of care. About 40% of the homes with school age children had no preschool children in care. A few of these homes were licensed for ten children and provided the atmosphere of a small center. The other 60% of homes with school age children had a wide age range which included preschool children. Over half of the caregivers with preschool children reported that they were caring for young siblings of school age children.

Who Is In School Age Day Care?

School age day care at present serves a relatively narrow age range. In group care we found that all but a very few children were between the ages of five and eight. Only those group programs which are able to provide for the skills and interests of older children are able to hold them in the program. In family day care the distribution by age is quite similar to that found in group care, however we did find a slighly larger percentage of older children in family day care. Older children were more often found in those homes where the mother cares only for school age children.

The question of which children get into group care and which ones go to family day care appears to depend heavily on the particular type of care which was chosen by the parent during the child's preschool years. Children who start out in group care are apt to continue in it. The same holds true for family day care.

Although the study on family day care was not designed to yield information about the amount of non-licensed care, we suspect that there is a considerably more unlicensed care for school age than for preschool children. Neighbors and mothers of classmates often agree to take care of children after school. The arrangement may turn out to be quite casual and temporary or more supervised and permanent, but it usually begins as a favor to the working parent. Women who embark on care in

00006

this way are very rarely licensed and they are placed in the awkward position of breaking the law by performing what they see to be a neighborly act.

During the course of this study it became clear that many children are in need of supervision whose parents cannot afford the cost of care or who are unable to transport their children to centers where care is provided. Undoubtedly the deficiencies in our current day care system encourage many conscientious parents to leave their children unsupervised at a far earlier age than these parents would choose if more adequate services were available.

Program: The Experiences Provided to Children in Group Care

According to our findings, the program which is offered in school age group care can be described as one of three types:

Simple (Custodial) Activity Programs. These programs are characterized by the large numbers of children who are not involved in activities (i.e., horsing around, in transition, self-care, etc.) and by activities which have little continuity and little adult involvement. Associated with these characteristics is an absence of good space, of supplies and equipment and of adult skills and know-how. This type of program is not limited to any particular sponsorhsip. Its occurrence appears to be tied to absence of adult input and of challenging activities.

Narrow Range Activity Programs. These programs, unlike those just described manage to keep children interested and involved in activities, but they do not offer a wide range of activities. Often the program meets the needs of the particular children being served or it meets their needs for the time being. Some examples of narrow range program types are:

1. The nursery school which provides familiar afternoon care to some of its children after they have gone on into kindergarten and first grade. Activities are limited, but such things as books and dramatic play may provide a focus of interest.

2. The games and simple art/crafts program which provides a room where children can play such games as checkers, Monopoly, etc., or use crayons and water colors.

3. The sports program which specializes in teaching basketball, baseball, etc.

These programs are best when they are self-selected according to a child's preference. The nursery school extended day and the games program probably need to be small in size to be workable.

The Complex Activity Program. This program provides activities for children which are not ordinarily introduced in nursery school and which require initiative and encourage continuity. Such activities are characterized by high adult

00007

involvement and know-how, good space and ample equipment and supplies. Work activities, such as preparing the afternoon snack, caring for animals, etc., also are a part of these programs. This type of program, with the help of authoritative adult support, appears to develop a social system among the children with responsibility, obligations and a sense of belonging. Often older children remain in the program and are given opportunities for leadership when they reach junior high school age.

Program in Family Day Care

There is a tremendous variation in the type of care which family day care mothers are trying to offer. Many provide a friendly, homey atmosphere for children during the few hours they are not in school and do not provide care during the summer (48% of caregivers interviewed do not provide summer care). Such care probably serves this limited purpose given the short number of hours these children are in care. Another group of caregivers provide an impressive array of services and enrichment. They take the children on trips, help with homework, often serve three meals and are quite willing for the children to stay overnight on occasion. In general these caregivers (about 40% of our sample) provide many of the sorts of experiences which would ordinarily be provided in a good home if mother were not working. This type of caregiver often provides care throughout the summer.

Cost of Care

Center Programs. Accurate information on cost of care was not available. Most centers which offer care for both school age and preschool children do not separate out the costs of preschool from school age care. Another complication in assessing costs is that some programs (such as Board of Education Children's Centers) charge and receive reimbursement only for the hours of care given, while other centers (including welfare sponsored centers) 3/ charge a flat fee for service without strictly tying it to hours in attendance.

Centers characteristically reported that cost of care was the same for school age as for preschool. Careful costing might well substantiate this, despite the fact than an adult can work with a larger group of school age than of preschool children. A good program for school age children provides planning time for staff and space especially for the school age program. In preschool programs staff often meet and plan during nap time, a saving which is not possible for school age staff. There is also a loss when space is empty during hours children are in school. Both of these features of school age programming increase the cost of care.

Transportation also adds greatly to cost of care of school age programming and yet is a necessary service for programs not within close walking distance of the school. The paucity of proprietary and non-profit programs for school age only probably is due to the difficulty in getting a service which includes transportation and partial space use to pay for itself.

3/ Centers receiving Title IV-A funds are now being forced to switch to hours of daily attendance as a basis for reinbursement.

00008

It is here that the current methods of funding complicate the delivery of services. Day care programs offered at the elementary school where a child is enrolled do not require transportation systems. However, as currently funded (in California), eligibility restrictions eliminate many children who are in need of care. Private programs rarely get a large enough clientele from one school alone and also have the problem of obtaining a site which has the proper commercial zoning near an elementary school. Therefore, these privately sponsored programs must add a transportation system at a cost which tends to eliminate many families who are ineligible for the school based program but need care for their children 4/.

Family Day Care. Caregivers appear to charge 15 - 30% less for children of school age as compared to preschool children, although prices vary tremendously. In many cases rates in family day care were comparable to those charged for group care by the non-public sector.

Problems in Providing Day Care Services to School Age Children

Problems of Supply and Demand

Croup Care. There are some definite problems in thinking about the expansion of group care which are quite different from those of providing care for preschool children. One is the problem of a physical facility which is vacant for many hours during the school year, but needs to be available full time when school is not in session. The provision of this type of space is expensive. Cost of space is one reason why so few proprietary facilities exist for school age children.

On the other hand, if school age children share space that is used by younger children or other groups, the result is often that school age children have inadequate facilities for good program development. Probably one of the important experiences for school age children is the chance to develop long range projects which go from day to day. This type of programming means that equipment must be available and space provided for unfinished projects -- a problem not easily solved when space is shared.

Provision of transportation from the elementary school to the center also greatly adds to the cost of care and, in effect, limits the supply of care available. Recent increases in the cost of insurance and gasoline have aggravated this problem.

Family Day Care. In family day care the small number of hours that a school age child is in care also creates problems. Many family day care mothers prefer

4/ The other alternative for private care which we found was the preschool center that also cares for children of school age and lets children walk to the center or makes informal (and usually unofficial) use of staff member's automobile. These programs, while low in cost, usually serve few children and find it difficult to offer a complex activity program. They are able to exist because of their small scale of operation.

00009

to have preschool children because they receive more money for the full day of care. If the caregiver saves a space for a part-time school age child she relinquishes a space for a full-time child. Problems of increasing the supply of care for school age children are closely tied to licensing regulations.

Licensing

Licensing regulations are a problem for both group and family care of school age children.

Group Care. Since group care can only be licensed if it is housed in an area with commercial zoning, a site often cannot be selected which is within walking distance of the school. In consequence a transportation system must be devised. Other problems with licensing of group care are regulations which have not been designed specifically for school age programs. The amount of square footage, toileting, staff qualifications and safety precautions often are not appropriate for school age children. Square footage required for school age children is only 30 square feet as compared to 35 for preschool (elementary schools typically provide even less).

School age group day care is in a curious limbo and is often defined by what it is not. It is not a school; it is not a day nursery. The fact that it does care for children places it under jurisdiction of the state licensing agency, but everyone agrees that this is an awkward and underfined relationship. The fire and health departments vacillate between applying school, summer camp, or day nursery requirements -- an approach which is perceived by the licensed on a scale which ranges from ridiculous to malevolent.

Family Day Care. The licensing regulations in California are designed in ways which definitely discourage care of school age children. In family day care one of the most annoying and restrictive regulations is that a caregiver may hold a license for children from birth to age 6 or a license for children age 3 to 16. Family day caregivers are continually finding that the age of their children does not coincide with the current status of their license. The other regulation which seems unduly restrictive is on the number of children permitted. Any of the family day care mother's own children under age 14 must be counted as part of the maximum of six children which she is permitted. Caregivers report that their older children coming home from school are often a big help with younger children and serve to improve the caregiving rather than complicate it. Also there is the feeling of many caregivers that they can easily manage more school age children than regulations permit. There is a particular type of caregiver who likes school age children, works particularly well with them and could easily increase the size of her group, to perhaps, ten. Although this type of license is permitted in family day care, increasing number of mothers are running into zoning problems when they apply for the special license.

There is also the problem of women who are willing to supervise children after school in informal ways, but who do not see themselves in the "official" role of licensed caregiver. They remain invisible and mothers who need care often have

great trouble in making neighborhood connections with women who could meet their needs.

Problems with Staffing and Staff Training

The ambiguous status of school age care also becomes apparent in an examination of staffing practices. Most of the leadership in current programs comes from people with training in early childhood education or in elementary education. Neither of these training programs appears to provide sufficient expertise in dealing with older children or in providing a stimulating environment for them. Also we must conclude that certification for work with young children or an elementary teaching credential does not guarantee competence in caring for children of school age.

Our findings indicate that adults who work with school age children need competences which are not provided in the training programs for either preschool or elementary school teachers -- namely:

1. The ability to provide leadership and to set limits, in ways which help children to understand how social systems work and give them experience with authoritative but non-punitive models.

2. The ability to set up an environment where children can learn skills which can be developed later into both vocational interests and profitable leisure time activities.

3. As part of the first two, the ability to generate a climate where children can develop values and serious commitments.

At present there is no defined role of child care worker in school age care. Nor are there training programs which prepare people for such an occupation with older children. Perhaps the training which would most closely resemble this is the preparation of group workers or child care workers for work with children in residential treatment centers.

Ambiguity of the Adult Role A further complication is the uncertainty which many child care workers experience about their role. Often their duties are defined in negatives: you are not a parent and not a teacher. As staff have explained, the question of discipline is quite different with school age than with nursery school children, and discipline must be accomplished with the supports built into the authority role of a parent or teacher.

The necessity of dealing with issues of diversity often tempts every one to keep things on a safe, superficial level. Especially in public child care adults and children are brought together for reasons which have little to do with parental choice or value systems. Most people staffing centers have not had training which has helped them to deal with differences in values and outlook, nor do many get much encouragement to risk following their intuition about such things. It is usually safer to avoid discussions of differences than risk the consequences of a clarification of an area of real conflict.

00011

For example, touching can have very different meaning from one family to another. In some families touching is a clear expression of affection. In another family it may be used to communicate feelings of fear or helplessness. In others it is used only for expression of sexual feelings, while others may use it intrusively to express feelings of irritation. In a day care program it is understandable that touching can lead to a series of miscommunicated messages. A program which creates a comfortable, homelike atmosphere will also encourage familiar homelike patterns of communication. These expressions will have the potential for a variety of misinterpretations unless the adult can keep communication open on a personal level, taking an active role in the interpretation of feelings.

Regulations, Procedures, Legal and Liability

Certain rules and procedures greatly restrict flexibility and creative problem solving in school age programs.

Hourly Cost. Programs which are funded according to the number of child hours of care given must be very careful to keep the number of child hours in attendance high. Consequently absence or lateness on the part of enrollees must be controlled. Budgeting according to hours of care given often means that a parent must bring the child to the center for a sign-in in the morning even though she would prefer a leisurely breakfast at home with the child going directly from home to school. Or a parent may wish to take the child out for three or four weeks in the summer to visit relatives. These experiences may be good for children, but each hour the child is away from the center decreases the center budget. Directors who believe strongly that children should spend time with parents or outside of the center often are torn between the pressing need to keep their budget intact and the child's chances to do other things. Parents are forced to decide whether to relinquish plans for summer camps or trips rather than risk losing their day care slot.

Marshalling Resources. There are many school age facilities which might be shared for enrichment of the program, but there often is no way to account for costs or to handle liability. For example, a program for preschool and school age children is housed on a junior high school site. The school age children need more space for activities. The junior high gym is available at least one afternoon a week, but the principal will not share it, because the janitor will complain and he is uncertain about issues of liability. It is less risky to refuse at the beginning than to hassle the complications of sharing, because there are no rewards for cooperation, only possibilities for trouble.

This same school age program is located within a short walking distance of a Boys Club which has an excellent workshop. Several of the boys want to go there regularly. Their parents would like to arrange for them to report to the center, have a snack and then go to the Boys Club for workshop two or three afternoons a week. The center cannot permit this, because it would have empty slots on these two days, nor could it invite Boys Club children over to visit, thus filling the slots. Consequently these boys can either forget about the workshop or withdraw from day care.

Legal Liability. Legal advisors increasingly are advising that any activity which entails risk be eliminated, such as use of a staff car for errands or short shopping trips. Administrative concern for legal consequences often greatly restricts program development.

Problems With Program

School age care has two major advantages over preschool programs: the competence of its children, and its freedom from pressures to be "school". After years of observing young children in day care, we were impressed by the much greater competence of school age children. Observing young children in day care, one fairly often sees children who are "falling apart" or losing track of themselves and who need adult attention at times when it is not available. We didn't see these kinds of problems with school age children; they appeared independent of adults, even in settings which had little to offer.

What bothered us most about much that we saw was its apparent superficiality. If adults were not being negative, they often were not being very positive either, and much of what we saw seemed bland, innocuous, and lacking in impact.

Physical Separation From the Community

Much school age day care is provided to keep children from the community. While in care they are protected momentarily from the dangers of unsupervised exploration of a community which is not judged safe or suitable. But in the process they are often cut off from observing or contacting life as it unfolds in the community. School age children need a neighborhood-community setting, and providing for this need is no easy matter. One pressing problem is how to get them into the community. Few of these children seem to walk anywhere. Yet there is an intimacy of knowledge that comes from traversing an area by foot day after day, that is entirely different from being transported through an area. There is also a growing sense of competence and responsibility which comes with the freedom to explore and map, in one's mind, a neighborhood. For most children enrollment in group care automatically means that they are confined to the center until an age when they refuse to come any longer. And at this point the pendulum swings from total supervision to no supervision at all.

This separation from the community often further isolates children in group care from adults who are doing adult work. Such isolation is now common for many children, but it seems especially pronounced for children in group care When trips are planned they are often excursions to Disneyland, Marineland or places of amusement; only a few centers choose places of work such as dairies, bakeries, etc. Probably very few children have been to the places where their parents are employed. If you have only two or four bus trips for an entire year, everyone wants to p[illegible]

00013

something that is exciting. Given a choice, most children will opt for Disneyland or Lion Country Safari rather than a trip to the bank where Joe's mom works.

Informal trips in staff automobiles to hardware stores, markets, hobby shops and lumber yards are important opportunities for experience in the community. Yet legal advisors and insurance companies are effectively eliminating these for centers which do not provide bus transportation.

Too Few Arenas for Initiative

Another contributor to the superficiality of many children's lives is the absence of an arena for real initiative, an opportunity to do something which is needed or has real impact. Work which needs to be done or self-chosen work both have this potential. Caring for animals, delivering newspapers or groceries, mowing lawns, are activities which have value to the adult community and enable a child to identify himself with the world of work. The opportunity to earn money as a result of one's work is valued by many children. Such opportunities are often rare in day care and some day care systems forbid money-making projects or paid work.

Self-chosen work which takes the form of a goal to be completed is another way in which children learn the meaning of commitment. The opportunity to build such things as a tree house or club house (an opportunity offered in the adventure playgrounds of Denmark or the backyard for children who go home after school) often is missing. The kinds of self-chosen projects which older children undertake frequently require a territorial claim to a piece of space, tools and a variety of supplies (many are discarded or scrounged), all things which are not commonplace in a day care setting.

The absence of such opportunities often leaves children with deficits in those experiences which are essential to give meaning to more formal schooling. A child who has never learned, as a result of his passionate involvement in his own construction, the importance of accurate measurements or the usefulness of finding the middle of something can hardly be expected to devote himself to such problems posed in school books. Active involvement in the world of real tasks inevitably creates the need for skills and knowledge. Adolescence becomes a hazardous time for children who have not developed skills and interests during their earlier school years and who have not clear understanding of the feelings of self-esteem which result from completing a difficult project.

The Future of School Age Day Care

In describing services and problems, some specific recommendations have been made concerning licensing, eligibility and funding. However, the important issues in school age day care appear to involve the relationship of the community and the school to the life of the child. Therefore, we found ourselves forced to look for solutions in a much broader context than seems necessary in thinking about younger children.

The Essential Ingredients

Good day care for children of school age needs three kinds of resources: (1) Adults who can help children learn skills, understand how social systems work, and develop satisfying arenas of initiative where industry and competence are required to bring plans to fruition. (2) Spaces and places where things can happen. Older children need more square feet of space, not less, than younger children. A good school age program needs places for the development of a wide variety of physical skills, places where projects can be carried out over a long period of time (shared space often makes this impossible), quiet places free from intrusion, and places which are adequately equipped with tools and supplies to teach skills and craftsmanship. (3) Access to the community. It seems doubtful that the first two criteria could be met without some access to the community, because few programs can offer, within their narrow confines the variety of resources which a group of children with different talents, interests and developmental levels need to get a sense of themselves as capable of work, planning and commitment. This statement also implies that school age children need a community which is safe and permits them to circulate through it.

Who Should Be Eligible

At present most programs must accept or reject children according to the parent's income or employment status, rather than according to parental need or ability of the program to serve a particular child. Often parents who are in great need of care have no choice but to let their children fend on their own. A good system should provide care to those who need it. Many recreation programs could be used as additional resources for day care, but if this were accomplished by changing the eligibility so that current users would be barred, the solution would only add to the over-all problem of limited facilities for all school age children.

The Supervisory Function

A first priority of day care is to provide supervision for children. There seem to be three possibilities for building in the supervisory function: (1) Through direct supervision by a child care worker to whom the child reports and who is responsible for the child's activities. (2) Through supervision by someone in the neighborhood. This person might be a family day care mother who maintains the same type of close supervision as a worker in a group program, or it might be a neighbor or mother of a classmate to whom the child reports and discusses his plans for the remainder of the day. (3) Through remote supervision by the parent. It does not seem realistic to expect that all children will be directly supervised during their out-of-school hours. Especially as children grow older, many will rebel against close supervision and can safely and responsibly care for themselves. A very difficult problem for a working parent to solve is how to turn a child loose in a community which cannot constructively absorb children who are ready to explore and begin defining their relation to it.

00015

Where Should Care Take Place?

The life of a school age child is inexorably centered around the public school. The elementary school in most communities is located within walking distance of a child's home, its location is known to everyone in the neighborhood and it is the place where children are when they need care (except possibly for summer, and then we found summer school being used for purposes of day care.) Although we found programs which had little interplay with the school, these programs were few in number and do not show much promise for being implemented on a large scale. The school seems to be the place where day care for school age children should find its focus.

Traditionally, the public school has not been much concerned with the child's life out of school. The expectation has been that the family will adjust and adapt to the school, not vice-versa. Consequently, most schools have remained untouched by the changes which maternal employment and the increasing number of single parent families have brought to the lives of the children which they serve. Most schools offer little help to a working mother who is trying to make day care arrangement for her child. In fact, school officials often complicate family life by cavalierly announcing short days (so teachers can meet, etc.) or by changing children's hours of attendance to fit special reading programs.

We are suggesting that schools cannot continue to remain aloof from the social changes which have so radically altered the context in which they operate. Parents often are astounded to discover how little the schools their children attend differ from the ones which they knew. There are the same bells, the salute to the flag, reading groups, weekly spelling, penalties for tardiness, PTA meetings, etc. The vast changes which many parents see are the increases in the overall size of the school, the disappearance of the long lunch hour, the disappearance of the small neighborhood shops where children used to loiter and greet the shopkeeper going to and from school, the marked increase in numbers of children who move in and out of the neighborhood without ever becoming good friends or enemies, the disappearance of vacant lots where caves and shacks and bike tracks used to be built, the switch from letting children walk or take the streetcar to the library to driving them or not going at all, and letting TV substitute for reading time.

All of these changes in the surrounding environment have worked to decrease opportunities for a child to have direct and personal contact with things and people. Perhaps it is time to redefine at least a part of the school's mission, and to work for ways to reintroduce other experiences which play a vital part in educating the whole child.

We have always argued for diversity in child care options, and again we argue for variety in opportunities for children and choice for parents. In proposing that school age day care should find its focus in the school, we are not proposing that its form be determined by school personnel. It is important that the child care aspect of a child's day should not be governed by the same administrative logic that rules the school's academic program.

00016

Questions of control always seem to revert to funding practices. The models which we will propose could be funded in a variety of ways, through community youth serving agencies, through the school district or through 4-C or some other form of community coordination. We have seen good programs develop out of all these types of funding when the leadership was strong and there was freedom to employ talented enthusiastic staff 5/. This type of freedom implies, of course, that the non-academic program is administered through a separate channel and has the autonomy to develop its own guidelines.

Group Day Care in Conjunction With the School: Some Alternative Models

Day Care Housed Within the School

With the falling child population many elementary schools, for the first time in years, find themselves with empty classrooms. In such schools day care can be housed within the school, using the school playground for the outdoor recreation area 6/.

Funding could come through the school district or through an outside community agency. When funding for such a program comes from the school district, the program staff may find it harder to get support for program thrusts which are clearly outside of school tradition, although this is not necessarily the case. Support systems for staff may work better if funding comes from another agency. Day care staff who have introduced such a program into a traditional school report that the school staff initially judge such a program by their established classroom standards. Typically, everyone from janitor to principal experiences culture shock to see rugs, pillows, hot plates and pop corn poppers replace desks and tidy bulletin boards. Attempts to turn a hall into a temporary play space inevitably meet with strong resistance (*But we can't let children run in the hall!*). Apparently, it takes a great deal of patience to gain acceptance for a program housed in a school. Acceptance appears to come more easily if the worker has had good training and is able to interpret sound principles of child development as a basis for the program.

Day Care In a Separate Building or Adjacent to the School Grounds

For schools with no empty classrooms, there is the possibility of providing a separate building on the school playground. When the day care function is housed in a separate building, it is easier to implement a program which is entirely apart and separate from the school function. Conversely, the program usually has little impact on the elementary school.

Centers can also be near or adjacent to school buildings. If youth-serving agencies or churches are nearby, they might provide the program or merely provide

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5/ We would not want to see a school district use child care as a dumping ground for its mediocre or surplus teachers.

6/ In California an occasional Children's Center program funded through a school district is housed in this way. In Portland, Oregon, many of the Latch Key programs funded through 4-C are housed in the schools.

00017

the space. Once a building is officially off the school grounds it becomes freer from school influences. Centers under school district sponsorship which are not located in the school or on school grounds are still free from the burden of daily busing and often have the added advantage of being clearly identified by both children and administrators as a program totally separate from the school day.

The School As a Planning Center

The group program, as some of our case histories in our final report demonstrated, can provide a rich, warm home base for a limited number of children. However, even the best program is limited in its resources; and many schools have more children needing care or at least some structure to their out-of-school hours than the existing group programs can accommodate. Working mothers (and other parents too) could function more effectively and responsibly if the school took seriously its relationship to the child's life out of school and gave them some help in locating good day care solutions. Parents do not have good access to information about the variety of choices which could be made for the child's after-school time, such as family day care homes, the recreational programs of youth-serving agencies -- classes in gymnastics and other skills, music lessons. Undoubtedly a community offers far more activities than those officially announced. Such activities could be located or new ones created if there were someone actively thinking about these needs and keeping in touch with other resource people.

A second resource which many parents need is a transportation system to get children from school to activities. If a school could provide some type of flexible jitney service which could drop children off at the art center, the library, Mrs. Jones' family day care home, at the connection to the crosstown bus, etc., children could take advantage of far more activities that would provide a meaningful match between potential talents and needed skills.

This model would need, in addition to the vehicles for transportation, at least one worker and an office -- perhaps an unused classroom which also provides a meeting place for children. The worker would need to know what school age children need and how to find resources in the community. In addition such a person should be a good matchmaker.

The School As a Community Center

A school which could offer both a group program housed in, at or near the school and a resource center could meet a wide variety of needs. For example, the group program might be especially suited to younger children who still found it exciting to be away from home and to play with friends in a warm, somewhat protected atmosphere.

The resource center could refer parents to family day care for children who needed more privacy to pursue special interests or found the long day with a group

00018

tiring or over-stimulating. And for older children, especially, the resource center could provide access to the community and to skills which could not be taught in the school.

When one starts to think of a full range of services which could be provided out of a school, the possibilities are endless. Many schools which have been organized as alternatives find it natural to stay open for 10 to 12 hours a day, building in day care almost inadvertently as they build in the range of experience that they want for children.

In school districts where classrooms have become surplus commodities one typical solution is to transfer students and to close a school as a means of cutting school district costs. It seems a pity that more creative uses are not being made of such schools. If such a school could continue to operate as a neighborhood school at perhaps 50 to 75% of its regular enrollment, the remainder of the space might then be used to bring community activities into the school. Suppose, for example, that such a school used some of its extra space for activity programs, work areas, and a resource office. Any remaining space might be made available to adult groups or individuals who wanted work space and would agree to spend their work time in a setting where watching, listening and some visiting was permitted on the part of school childrn.

In summary, a major finding of this study is that issues involved in care for school age children are quite different from those of preschool care. Both group and family day care for school age children need attention to their unique problems as day care services.

00019